

Appl. No.: 10/627,562  
Amdt. dated 12/16/2005  
Reply to Office Action of 10/05/2005

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (currently amended) An easy-opening, retortable container comprising:  
a base portion having a bottom and side and defining an interior space and an opening thereto;  
a single-layer plastic membrane of sufficient size to cover said opening, said membrane defining first and second sides and having coplanar inner and outer portions, said outer portion being friction welded joined to said base portion, said inner and outer portions being defined by an annular groove disposed in one of the first and second sides of said membrane; and  
a grip portion integral to said plastic membrane, said grip portion being disposed on said second side of said plastic membrane and connected to said inner portion; and  
wherein said annular groove defines an annular fail portion between said inner and outer portions of said plastic membrane such that said inner portion is structured to be removed from said outer portion by urging said grip portion away from said outer portion, thereby tearing said annular fail portion and opening the container.
2. (original) An easy-opening, retortable container according to Claim 1 wherein said base portion is formed of plastic.
3. (original) An easy-opening, retortable container according to Claim 1 wherein said grip portion is a circumferentially continuous annular pull ring extending generally in a plane substantially parallel to said plastic membrane.
4. (original) An easy-opening, retortable container according to Claim 3 wherein said grip portion is connected to said inner portion of said plastic membrane by a primary connection portion and at least one secondary connection portion, said at least one secondary connection portion being circumferentially spaced from said primary connection portion and weaker than said primary connection portion such that said at least one secondary connection portion is configured to break when said grip portion is urged from said inner portion such that said grip portion is hinged by the primary connection portion.

Appl. No.: 10/627,562  
Amdt. dated 12/16/2005  
Reply to Office Action of 10/05/2005

5. (original) An easy-opening, retortable container according to Claim 3 wherein said grip portion defines a diameter which substantially corresponds to the diameter of said annular groove.

6. (original) An easy-opening, retortable container according to Claim 1 wherein said fail portion has a strength of about 14 pounds or less.

7. (original) An easy-opening, retortable container according to Claim 1 wherein said membrane and said base portion are each formed of a high barrier plastic material to prevent transmission of moisture and oxygen therethrough.

8. (original) An easy-opening, retortable container according to Claim 1 wherein said membrane is formed of polyolefin.

9. (original) An easy-opening, retortable container according to Claim 1 wherein said membrane includes oxygen scavengers disposed in a polyolefin.

10. (currently amended) An easy-opening, retortable container according to Claim 1 wherein said outer portion of said membrane defines a circumferential ridge extending from said first side of said membrane, said ridge structured to engage said base portion of the container.

11. (cancelled)

12. (currently amended) An easy-opening closure for hermetic sealing of an opening of a base portion of a retortable container, the closure comprising:

a single-layer plastic membrane of sufficient size to cover the opening, said membrane defining first and second sides and having coplanar inner and outer portions, said outer portion adapted to be joined to the base portion, said inner and outer portions being defined by an annular groove disposed on the first side of said membrane; and

a grip portion integral to said plastic membrane, said grip portion being disposed on said second side of said plastic membrane and connected to said inner portion; and

Appl. No.: 10/627,562  
Amdt. dated 12/16/2005  
Reply to Office Action of 10/05/2005

wherein said annular groove defines an annular fail portion between said inner and outer portions of said plastic membrane such that said inner portion is structured to be removed from said outer portion by urging said grip portion away from said outer portion, thereby tearing said annular fail portion and opening the container.

13. (original) An easy-opening closure according to Claim 12 wherein said grip portion is a pull ring extending generally circumferentially in a plane substantially parallel to said plastic membrane.

14. (original) An easy-opening closure according to Claim 12 wherein said grip portion is connected to said inner portion of said plastic membrane by a primary connection portion and at least one secondary connection portion, said at least one secondary connection portion being circumferentially spaced from said primary connection portion and weaker than said primary connection portion such that said at least one secondary connection portion is configured to break when said grip portion is urged from said inner portion such that said grip portion is hinged by the primary connection portion.

15. (original) An easy-opening closure according to Claim 12 wherein said fail portion has a strength of about 14 pounds or less.

16. (original) An easy-opening closure according to Claim 12 wherein said membrane is formed of a high barrier material to prevent transmission of moisture and oxygen therethrough.

17. (original) An easy-opening closure according to Claim 12 wherein said membrane is formed of polyolefin.

18. (original) An easy-opening closure according to Claim 12 wherein said membrane includes oxygen scavengers disposed in a polyolefin.

19. (currently amended) An easy-opening closure according to Claim 12 wherein said outer portion of said membrane defines a circumferential ridge extending from said first side of said membrane, said ridge structured to engage the base portion of the container.

Appl. No.: 10/627,562  
Amdt. dated 12/16/2005  
Reply to Office Action of 10/05/2005

20. (currently amended) An easy-opening closure according to Claim 12 wherein said outer portion of said membrane ~~portion~~ is adapted to be friction welded to the base portion.

Claims 21-27 (cancelled)

28. (new) An easy-opening, retortable container according to Claim 10 wherein said circumferential ridge extends in a continuous circular path from said first side of said outer portion of said membrane, said ridge defining a tapered profile and corresponding in diameter to said side of said base portion, and said ridge being friction welded to said side of said base portion.

29. (new) An easy-opening, retortable container according to Claim 1 wherein said grip portion is formed during molding of said plastic membrane such that said grip portion is integral to said plastic membrane.

30. (new) An easy-opening closure according to Claim 19 wherein said circumferential ridge extends in a continuous circular path from an outer periphery of the outer portion of said membrane, said ridge defining a tapered profile and corresponding in diameter to the base portion such that said ridge is structured to be friction welded to the base portion.

31. (new) An easy-opening closure according to Claim 12 wherein said grip portion is formed during molding of said plastic membrane such that said grip portion is integral to said plastic membrane.